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LETTER DATED 7 OCTOBER 1992 FROM THE FIRST DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER OF GEORGIA ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

In connection with the statement of the President of the Security Council of 6 October concerning the situation in Georgia, we would be grateful if the text of attached statement could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Tedo JAPARIDZE
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Annex

Statement dated 7 October 1992 of the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Georgia, Tedo Japaridze, to the Security Council

It was only yesterday that Georgia gained its independence and embarked on the path of democratic transformation. Little we knew that already today the Republic of Georgia would be compelled to appeal to the international community for help as its very existence is at stake. By some higher design Georgia has been chosen to be the place where eternal struggle between the old way of living and the future way of thinking is being settled.

Armed conflict in one of the regions of Georgia - Abkhazia - instigated by an assorted variety of local separatist groups, nationalist forces of the confederation of Caucasian peoples and reactionary elements of some governmental structures of Russia, including representatives of military establishment, have unleashed a well-planned conspiracy aimed at the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Georgian Republic.

The leadership of Abkhazia, taking advantage of the complex political setting in Georgia, has undertaken an attempt to turn the autonomous Republic into a den of terrorists and mercenaries who stop and rob trains, destroy highways and bridges, causing damage to property and environment. Political figures, including the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, have been kidnapped. Abkhazia has been transformed into a centre directing terrorist and subversive activities towards the rest of Georgia and beyond.

At the same time, the Abkhazian leaders openly ignored the laws of Georgia as well as their own constitution. They monopolized power and rejected repeated attempts on Georgian part to establish fundamentally new relationship within the framework of unified and indivisible frontiers, recognized by the international community.

Georgia has been operating on the basic premises, long adopted by the civilized community of nations - namely the independence of one nation cannot be built at the expense of national interests of other nations, especially those living in close proximity throughout the centuries.

It is unacceptable that under the guise of the right to self-determination, the actual splintering of the territory of a democratic State Member of the United Nations is taking place. It is even more appalling when this happens in the State which follows all norms of international law, especially those pertaining to the protection of human rights and the rights of ethnic minorities.

In the Georgia-Abkhazia case, the situation is further complicated by the fact that the separatists constitute only a fraction of the whole population of Abkhaz Autonomous Republic. The world knows little about the fact that

Abkhazians amount to only 18 per cent of the total population of Abkhazia itself.

We believe it is morally wrong when through manipulation of laws and discriminatory election procedures, the voters of one nationality that make up 18 per cent send to the parliament of the Abkhazia Autonomous Republic more deputies than the voters of another group which constitute half of the population of Abkhazia. It is practically impossible to create and maintain special political, electoral or other zones for Abkhazians only to the detriment of other nationalities, as it is inconceivable to separate the ethnic minorities living in Abkhazia from each other.

This situation is not uniquely Georgian. Similar case studies are referred to in universally recognized documents, such as the 1970 United Nations Declaration on the Principles of International Law; the Helsinki Final Act; and subsequent documents of CSCE, including the Declaration adopted at the Summit Meeting of Helsinki 2.

These documents call for the protection of the rights of national minorities, as well as responsibilities of those minorities. Fully aware of these fundamental tenets, Georgia continued to negotiate on the issue of the political status of Abkhazia even at a time when it was compelled to declare a state of emergency to protect railroads from the Russian Federation to Armenia.

Since the Abkhazian leaders refused to effectively stop the activities carried out by subversive groups based on Abkhazia, Georgia had to relocate its armed forces within this region. Every sovereign country has the right to protect the security of its population and its territorial integrity by pursuing and punishing terrorists as long as they remain within the borders and jurisdiction of the State. The redeployment of the armed forces of Georgia from one part of the country to another - in this case Abkhazia - was the only possible solution under the adverse conditions existing at that time.

Unfortunately, this troop movement was met by fire from the so-called Abkhazian national guard. The armed conflict was thus unleashed. The responsibility squarely rests with those leaders, who under false pretenses of protecting independence drove the country into a bloody confrontation. The accusations, that the Georgian Government instigated unrestricted "aggression" or "occupation" of Abkhazia, are totally groundless and devoid of reality.

Moreover, the subsequent events justified the redeployment of Georgian armed forces. They arrived at the border with Russia and put the area under their control thus effectively cutting off the channel for terrorist activities.

Abkhaz separatists pretended to be ready for peace negotiations, but this turned out to be just another smokescreen, behind which they started to receive state of the art weapons from different sources, including the so-called confederation of Caucasian nations.

These illegal entities in the extreme southern part of Russia have been for years in active opposition to the democratic government of President Yeltsin, encouraging the worst forms of religious and ideological bigotry and political adventurism. Thus, it comes as no surprise that at the very inception of the Abkhazian conflict, the so-called president and parliament of this illegitimate, non-governmental organization, terrorist in essence, has declared our country and its capital city a zone of disaster, calling for the use of any means of terror, including acts of mass murder.

Thousands upon thousands of terrorists and hired assassins have penetrated and continue to penetrate Georgia's boundaries. They by far exceed the Abkhazian separatists in numbers.

The Georgian forces actually found themselves involved in full-scale undeclared war with the mercenaries, launched from the territory of a neighbouring country. There are those who would like to ascribe to this war some religious underpinning. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Religious and racial tolerance have always been the components of the political culture of the Georgian State. That is why the appeals by Muslim fundamentalists of the confederation to assist Abkhazians because of common religion is misleading and aims at distorting if not outright concealing the facts. The conflict has no religious overtone whatsoever. By the way only half of the 80,000 ethnic Abkhaz are Muslims, the other half being of Christian denomination.

The real aim being pursued is easily recognizable. It is an attempt to cut off Abkhazia from Georgia, unite it with the so-called confederation and thus obtain access to the sea. It is no coincidence that the present capital of Abkhazia - Sukhumi - has been simultaneously declared the capital of the so-called confederation.

Unfortunately, the Government of the Russian Federation cannot effectively stop the infiltration of Georgian territory by mercenaries. As for the Georgian Government, it has no power yet to control all the passages in the mountains.

On 3 September, in Moscow, an agreement was reached concerning the solution of the Abkhazian conflict by peaceful means. The Security Council earlier was informed about this. The Trilateral Commission was to implement these agreements. The most important aspect of the solution was the decision to use the armed forces of the Russian Federation to disarm and expel from the zone of conflict the armed mercenaries who came from Russia and are Russian citizens. However, neither the representatives of Russia or Abkhazia, nor the Russian army units deployed in the region, did anything to genuinely end the conflict.

The timetable of the withdrawal of the mercenaries from Abkhazia was adjusted and readjusted endlessly. At the same time, the numbers of the armed units were increasing. Surprisingly enough this time they were brought in by small ships and vessels belonging to or controlled by the official Russian

Navy. It was then that it became clear that the widespread conspiracy which I mentioned above, namely between Abkhaz separatists, nationalistic terrorists from the confederation of mountainous nations and reactionary forces from within the State structures of Russia, came to light for all practical purposes.

This conspiracy pursues three goals. First of all, it is directed against Georgia's sovereignty and increasing stability. Indeed, for certain groups of people, a stable, neutral and prosperous Georgia means the end of their historic imperial aspirations.

Secondly, the actions of the local Russian Commanders, which have all the ingredients of a "Generals' revolt", are aiming at the heart of democratic Russia, President Yeltsin and the positive processes initiated by him. Having said this, one should also add that it is strange that President Yeltsin has not yet repudiated or at least distanced himself from the declaration of the Russian Parliament which served as political and legal basis for this aggression.

Thirdly, and this should be of utmost concern to the international community of nations. What might seem from a distance as a local border skirmish, in fact, if left alone to the peoples of the States directly involved in the conflict, might attain regional dimensions. As a matter of fact, by the sheer magnitude of the violations of human rights, it has already become a global issue. This prompts me to recall that the crisis in Yugoslavia started and developed along the same blueprint.

Just a few facts: The positions vacated by the Georgian forces according to the Moscow agreements were quickly retaken by the Akhazian side. This change-over was and is accompanied by widespread acts of mass murder, vandalism and atrocities. In the ports of Gagra and Pitzunda more than 800 selectively Georgian nationals were executed during the last three to four days. The names were compiled in advance by local militia of Abkhaz origin. Alexander Petisashvili was buried alive; mother and son Gugineishvili shot in cold blood in their own house; POWs being used as moving targets and a number of them burned alive. Acco·ding to the statement of the new Abkhaz Administrator of the City of Gagra, they accomplished the execution of 65 men and women at the central city beach in the night and buried them in a mass grave.

We formally accuse these outlaws of perpetuating unspeakable atrocities and unusually cruel treatment of prisoners of war as well as the civilian population. The letter has come at the risk of mass murder and annihilation, suffering from torture and widespread degradation. We intend to appeal to the International Court of Justice to qualify these acts as war crimes and accordingly treat the perpetrators, that is bringing them to trial and punishment which they rightly deserve.

We can go on and on. The natural question is how this was made possible. Who protects and inspires new vampires of the Twentieth Century?

It is an established fact that since the time of the Moscow meetings, the number of the North Caucasian terrorists increased twofold and is now reaching 10,000. They are armed with state of the art weapons - 10 T-72s and T-80s tanks; modern anti-aircraft systems; ground to air missiles and so on - in short, with weapons which only the Russian army possesses. These weapons started to appear in the possession of Abkhaz and terrorist forces during the last two weeks.

Who is giving these weapons to the Abkhaz side, and even more important, who services and uses them? This question is not of a purely academic nature. It is a known fact that one needs highly trained personnel to man modern anti-aircraft systems. This kind of expertise is not currently available among terrorist groups, fortunately.

However, this lack of training was fully compensated by the "timely advice" of Generals Kondratiev and Sigutkin - local Commanders of the Russian army, who have established their headquarters in Gudauta, next to the headquarters of Abkhaz separatists.

During the conflict the Russian forces deployed in the region are preventing Georgian units from active operations limiting their movements. At the same time they afford the other side any and all necessary freedom of action. A Russian SU-24 airplane attacked and downed a rescue helicopter belonging to Georgia. The helicopter pilot was killed. This is just one example out of many incidents.

May we ask, what are two Russian cruiser ships doing in the territorial waters of Georgia and why are they firing at Georgian army positions, outside Pitzunda? Why does the Russian air force prevent the small Georgian air force from flying not only combat but also humanitarian rescue missions? Who actually attacked the airplane which the Chairman of the State Council, Mr. Shevardnadze, was flying on?

If we honestly and bluntly answer all these questions, one cannot but arrive at the sad conclusion that we are facing gross violation and neglect of accepted norms of international law. This is nothing short of the third attempt to annex Georgia; the first and second of course being in 1801 and 1921 respectively.

Georgia is defenceless in the face of a direct aggression, which the central Government of Russia is unable to curb because of the complex domestic and political situation. Nevertheless, the Russian democrats should realize that the situation in Georgia is not an isolated event. Rather it is an attempt to reverse the historic retreat of anti-democratic, reactionary forces on all fronts. If they succeed in Georgia, it will be a severe and destabilizing blow to the process of creating modern democratic society in Russia based on the universal human values and the supremacy of international law. That is why the voice of Russian democrats in defence of Georgia today will bring a rich harvest for them tomorrow.

The question of questions today is whether the young nascent democracy of Georgia will be allowed to die or the world community will act to save it. We hope for the latter.

In any case, the peoples of the Republic of Georgia of every national and ethnic origin or religious denomination, who cherish the ideals of a united, democratic, peace loving and prosperous Georgia, will rise and fulfil their civil and patriotic duty.

And one more thing. All we have said today, in one form or another was already spoken about in the address of Mr. Shevardnadze to the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly. It is the second time he has foreseen and warned the international community of the approaching conspiracy against democracy and the encroachment of the freedom of choice of peoples.

The situation in Georgia is grave. Even while I speak here, people are dying. The war is raging unabashed. We, in Georgia, ascribe high hopes and expectations to this session of the Security Council.

We want to use this opportunity and to thank the United Nations, the Security Council and the Secretary-General for everything they have already done. The previous fact-finding mission of the United Nations had a great positive political and psychological effect. Unfortunately, the excellent report prepared by the Secretariat has been overtaken by the recent events.

We have come here in search of peace. It is our last chance of attracting the attention of the world community to the gross misjustice done by reactionary and dark forces to the small, peace loving and unprotected nation.

We believe the United Nations in its collective wisdom and long honourable record of protecting small countries will not turn us away with empty hands. We believe the United Nations will find a way to bring to the quickest possible solution the military aggression and to launch peace talks in the region, in full compliance with the Moscow agreements of 3 September 1992, which should serve as a basis for a just and equitable settlement of the conflict. In this context, we will request the Security Council to authorize the Secretary-General to send his personal representative to Caucasus.

We would request the Security Council to send a small contingent of United Nations peace-keeping forces to the region. We recognize the financial and logistical implications of this request, but the situation warrants this action. If this request is unattainable we would however request the Security Council to consider the possibility of sending 10-15 military observers who will be working under the Secretary-General's personal envoy.

We also intend to lodge our formal complaint with the International Court of Justice to investigate the cases of atrocities and numerous violations of the Vienna and Hague Conventions.

We will use any and all United Nations specialized organizations as well as United Nations moral authority to make our voice heard by the public at large.

We have spoken. Now it is the United Nations turn. We ask for sympathy, understanding and justice. This is not much to ask, but they are vitally needed elements to us and to all new democracies of the world.